



CONCLUSIONS

From the preceding findings, we drew the following conclusions:

- ☀ The United States would benefit from development of national drought policy with preparedness as its core.
- ☀ Preparedness measures, particularly comprehensive drought planning and proactive mitigation measures, can lessen the impact of drought on individuals, communities, and the environment. They can also reduce the need for future emergency financial and other relief.
- ☀ Effective drought plans should have clearly identified objectives and performance standards and a clear exposition of the vulnerability of a region to drought, given current and expected water resources infrastructure and water uses. They should be flexible to avoid a “one size fits all” approach and allow for social, cultural, and religious differences. For both urban and rural communities, they should consider the location of alternate or supplemental sources of water, how this water can be conveyed to the point of need, and whether additional treatment is needed. They should also be based on cost and performance.
- ☀ Effective plans should evaluate drought programs to determine whether they identify and address priority environmental impacts and improve proactive mitigation of drought’s impacts on the environment through training, incentives, technical assistance, research, and public education. Effective plans should consider the allocation of water to meet the need to protect the environment and to meet immediate human needs.
- ☀ The people and entities that are likely to receive the greatest share of federal emergency assistance because of drought often have the fewest personnel, information, and financial resources to prepare for and reduce the potential impacts of drought.
- ☀ Individuals, businesses, local/county/state governments, tribes, and nongovernmental organizations with an interest in or responsibilities for drought management would benefit from training and technical assistance to plan for and reduce the impacts of drought.
- ☀ There are a number of success stories in drought preparedness and proactive mitigation at the individual, local, state, regional, and federal levels that would make excellent models for use in training and technical assistance. Among those cited in this report are the nonprofit TreePeople’s “Second Nature” program in Los Angeles, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California’s “Integrated Resource” and “Water Surplus and Demand Management” plans, Kentucky’s drought management plan, the Georgia Water Management Campaign, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s Drought Program, the Army Corps of Engineers’ simulated drought exercises, and the small watersheds assistance offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture
- ☀ Partnerships among nonfederal governments, the federal government, and private interests can go far in developing the tools and strategies for formulating and carrying out appropriate drought preparedness strategies.
- ☀ Proactive mitigation activities such as water conservation, science-based forest management, reuse of wastewater, desalination, pricing strategies, and the identification of back-up water supplies—when initiated before an emergency—can reduce vulnerability to drought events.
- ☀ In some parts of the country, there is insufficient area coverage or recorded history for stream gage and climate data.